STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES TOWARDS THE USE OF DISCOVERY LEARNING STRATEGY IN LEARNING READING COMPREHENSION

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to find out students' experiences towards the use Discovery Learning strategy in learning reading comprehension. This research used qualitative approach with case study method. This research was conducted in one of the public senior high schools in Karawang. The participants in this research were an English teacher and six students in tenth grade. Data were collected through classroom observation, interviews, and documentation. The data were analyzed by using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that students had positive experiences with the Discovery Learning strategy, which helped them understand text content, analyze text structure, expand vocabulary, and develop critical thinking skills. Students found the learning process enjoyable, engaging, and anxiety-free, which led to active participation in reading comprehension lessons. Future research could include larger sample sizes and diverse educational contexts to further validate the effectiveness of Discovery Learning strategies across various materials, subjects, and student profiles.

Keywords: Discovery Learning Strategy, Reading Comprehension, Students' Experiences

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengalaman siswa terhadap penggunaan strategi Discovery Learning dalam pembelajaran membaca pemahaman. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Penelitian ini dilakukan di salah satu sekolah menengah atas negeri di Karawang. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah seorang guru bahasa Inggris dan enam siswa kelas sepuluh. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa memiliki pengalaman positif dengan strategi Discovery Learning, yang membantu mereka memahami isi teks, menganalisis struktur teks, memperluas kosakata, dan mengembangkan keterampilan berpikir kritis. Para siswa menganggap proses pembelajaran menyenangkan, menarik, dan bebas dari rasa cemas, yang berujung pada partisipasi aktif dalam pelajaran membaca pemahaman. Penelitian di masa depan dapat mencakup ukuran sampel yang lebih besar dan konteks pendidikan yang beragam untuk memvalidasi lebih lanjut keefektifan strategi Discovery Learning di berbagai materi, mata pelajaran, dan profil siswa.

Kata kunci: Strategi Discovery Learning, Pemahaman Membaca, Pengalaman Siswa

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INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is essential in education, as poor reading skills can hinder academic growth (Anwar & Sailuddin, 2022). Finnochiaro (Maemun et al., 2019) highlights reading as the most critical skill for foreign language learners, including English. Across all education levels, reading skills are foundational. Trelease (Maemun et al., 2019) emphasizes that reading unlocks knowledge and boosts motivation; the more one reads, the stronger their skills and interest become. Reading comprehension also plays a central role in both first and second language acquisition, fostering critical thinking, knowledge retention, and overall communication skills. In EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning environments, it holds particular importance, as it facilitates not only academic understanding but also language development by exposing learners to essential vocabulary, grammar, and cultural nuances. Thus, strong reading comprehension is vital for students' holistic academic development.

Despite its importance, many students struggle with reading comprehension. (Wahyuni & Husen, 2023) found that limited vocabulary often impacts reading test scores, while (Harvey & Goudvish, 2007) noted that students frequently read without fully grasping the main ideas or structure, which complicates answering questions. These challenges arise from students' difficulty in connecting new information with prior knowledge. Although various instructional strategies have been introduced, such as explicit vocabulary teaching and guided reading practices, they have not fully resolved these comprehension issues, particularly in helping students apply critical thinking to connect ideas or infer meanings. This highlights the need for more effective, integrative approaches that address both vocabulary limitations and higher-order cognitive skills essential for deep comprehension.

Given these challenges, educators require efficacious methodologies to augment reading comprehension, as inappropriate techniques may obstruct the educational progression (Fatkhurrokhman et al., 2018). Discovery Learning, a pedagogical framework which learners autonomously investigate and resolve

issues, is distinguished by its focus on active participation and self-direction, thereby contrasting sharply with conventional approaches that frequently depend on the passive absorption of information. This pedagogical strategy facilitates students in constructing understanding by actively integrating novel information with their existing cognitive frameworks, thereby addressing a principal obstacle in reading comprehension. This principle aligns with Constructivism Theory by Bruner (1961), which posits that learners actively build knowledge through exploration and the integration of new information with prior knowledge. The theory underpins Discovery Learning by emphasizing independent inquiry, critical thinking, and meaning-making during the learning process. This approach allows learners to engage profoundly with texts while educators facilitate the process, fostering problem-solving capabilities and critical analytical skills (Lestari et al., 2021). Research such as that conducted by Suryani et al. (2023) underscores the efficacy of Discovery Learning not only in enhancing comprehension but also in fostering enduring educational engagement, as students assume responsibility for their learning journeys.

This research focuses on using the Discovery Learning strategy in learning comprehension of descriptive texts, which present detailed descriptions of an object. Descriptive texts require students to observe and convey vivid imagery, an essential skill that can be effectively fostered through discovery-based activities. As (Suryati, 2019) explains, descriptive texts enable readers to perceive an object as if they are experiencing it firsthand, making them an ideal context for applying Discovery Learning. This approach encourages students to actively engage in observing, exploring, and understanding detailed information, aligning with the text's requirements for vivid description and clarity. By promoting these observational and critical-thinking skills, Discovery Learning can enhance students' ability to construct detailed and imaginative comprehension of the material.

Research consistently supports the effectiveness of Discovery Learning in reading comprehension. Carolina et al. (2024) demonstrated significant

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improvements in seventh-grade students' descriptive text comprehension using Discovery Learning. Similarly, Suryani et al. (2023) confirmed that this approach aids high school students, especially those struggling with reading, and recommended it as an alternative strategy to enhance comprehension skills. However, while these studies highlight its effectiveness, they do not delve into students' experiences or perceptions of the Discovery Learning process. Exploring how students view and engage with this method could provide valuable insights for refining its application in diverse learning contexts.

Further studies have shown positive outcomes with Discovery Learning. Ariyana et al. (2020) observed benefits for both teachers and students in writing descriptive texts, achieving better class management and a good average student performance score of 76.8. Damayanti et al. (2023) reported notable gains in high school students' comprehension, with students largely agreeing on the strategy's effectiveness. Additionally, Muliati & Syam (2020) documented substantial reading skill improvements among EFL students, and Jivi et al. (2024) found that Discovery Learning significantly boosted first-year students' comprehension of recount texts, outperforming a control group.

Although previous research confirms the effectiveness of Discovery Learning in improving reading comprehension, there is limited exploration of how students themselves experience and perceive this strategy, particularly in understanding descriptive texts. In contrast to previous studies that predominantly measured outcomes, this research contributes to the theoretical understanding of Discovery Learning by highlighting its influence on students' cognitive and affective aspects. The cognitive aspect refers to how students develop their understanding, critical thinking, and vocabulary through active participation, while the affective aspect relates to students' motivation, confidence, and collaborative attitudes during the learning process. By investigating both aspects, this study offers a more comprehensive view of how Discovery Learning affects not only learning outcomes but also students' emotional and social engagement.

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The scientific novelty of this study lies in its focus on the subjective experiences of students, offering insights into how Discovery Learning not only supports comprehension outcomes but also influences students' motivation, collaboration, and confidence in learning. The findings are expected to provide practical implications for educators in designing more student-centered reading instruction and fostering positive classroom environments.

METHODOLOGY

This research utilizes a qualitative approach with a case study design. Creswell (2018) describe qualitative research as a method that generates descriptive data, focusing on participants' experiences or observable phenomena in real-world settings. This approach transforms collected data such as interviews, observations, and documents into meaningful descriptions and interpretations. The case study design was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of students' experiences with Discovery Learning in the context of learning reading comprehension of descriptive texts.

The study was conducted at a public senior high school in Karawang. Participants included one English teacher and six tenth-grade students. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, and documentation. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data. Following Braun & Clarke's (2006) framework, this involved familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, identifying and refining themes, and producing a narrative to summarize the findings. The themes identified were then used to reflect on how the Discovery Learning strategy impacts students' reading comprehension and their perceptions of the learning process. As this is qualitative research, the findings are presented through descriptive narratives, reflecting students' experiences with the Discovery Learning strategy in reading comprehension of descriptive texts. These narratives aim to provide a rich and detailed exploration of how this approach influences

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engagement and learning outcomes.The research procedure is illustrated in the following flowchart.
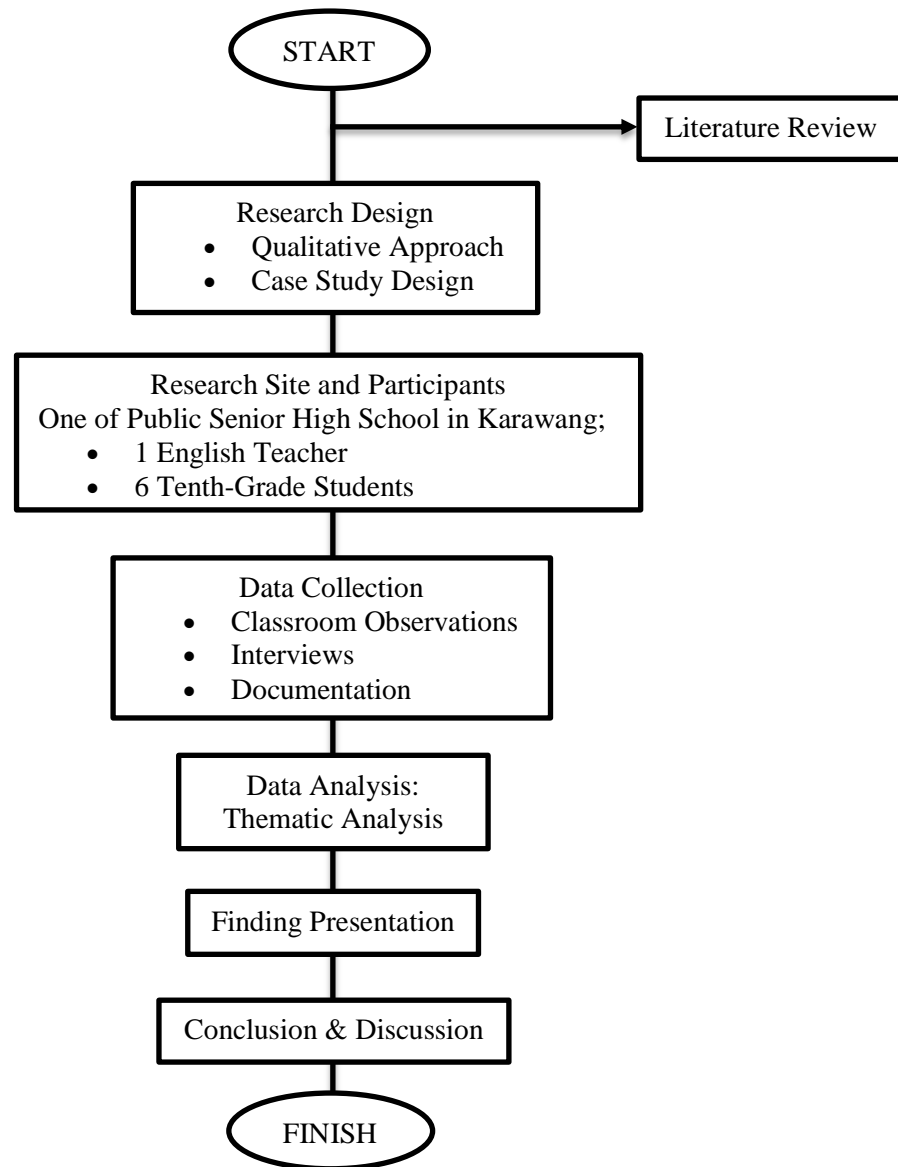

Figure 1. Research Flowchart

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study explored students' experiences with the Discovery Learning strategy in learning reading comprehension of descriptive texts. Following Syah's (2004) model, the results are organized based on the six steps of Discovery

Learning: stimulation, problem statement, data collection, data processing, verification, and generalization. These stages were implemented in the classroom, and the results illustrate how students responded at each stage. The results are organized to present findings from classroom observations, interviews with students and the teacher, and documentation. This structure highlights key stages where students demonstrated the highest levels of engagement and reveals insights into their learning experiences, as guided by the research question: "How are students' experiences towards the use of Discovery Learning strategy in learning reading comprehension of descriptive text?"

Syah (2004) outlined six steps for implementing Discovery Learning, with the first being the "Stimulation" stage. At this stage, the teacher introduced the strategy and presented students with pictures, prompting them to describe what they observed.

Figure 1. The Student Describes the Pictures

As evidenced in Figure 1, students displayed enthusiasm as they described the images. One student shared, *"Mempermudah karena kita mencari tahu langsung secara mandiri tanpa dijelaskan terlebih dahulu oleh guru,"* demonstrating how the visual stimuli helped them engage with the content. Teachers also noted that students were visibly involved, stating, *"Sepenglihatan saya itu siswa terlihat sangat terlibat. Mulai dari tahap stimulation, saya melihat*

mereka antusias dalam mendeskripsikan gambar dan membaca teks deskriptif yang diberikan." This suggests that the Stimulation stage not only motivated students but also encouraged them to think independently and critically about the information presented. In summary, the results highlight that the students were highly engaged and found the initial step of Discovery Learning motivating.

After that, the teacher continues the second stage, namely "Problem Statement" where students are guided to identify the level of difficulty of the topic by providing several problem formulations.

Figure 2. The Teacher Formulates a Problem Regarding the Topic

In this second stage, students identified and responded to different levels of difficulty in the topic through various problem formulations, which focused on understanding the structure and language features of descriptive texts. Interviews with students revealed that the strategy made it easier for them to find information, with one student stating, *"Strategi ini mempermudah untuk mencari informasi."* Another student added, *"Mempermudah kalo sudah mengerti cara kerjanya,"* emphasizing that once they understood how to use the strategy, they felt more

confident in addressing the problems. Teachers observed that students were more engaged as they tackled problems related to the key components of descriptive texts. This stage helped students become more involved in the learning process, which positively impacted their ability to comprehend the reading material. In conclusion, students felt challenged but focused, and the problem formulation helped prepare them for deeper engagement with descriptive texts.

Then, the teacher conducts the third stage in this strategy, namely "Data Collection" by forming 6 groups of 3-4 students to gather relevant information from various sources to test their hypotheses.

Figure 3. The Students Collect Data through Various Sources

At this stage, students' experience in learning reading comprehension with Discovery Learning was explored through group activities. Students were organized into small groups and assigned specific tasks to gather and analyze information collaboratively. One student shared, "*Mempermudah soalnya bisa mempersingkat waktu, karena kerja sama dengan kelompok, jadi untuk tugasnya dibagi-bagi, membuat lebih efektif.*" Another student added, *"Strategi ini sangat*

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membantu dalam menginterpretasikan teks deskriptif karena kita perlu mencari informasi terlebih dahulu di internet atau buku."

This is also supported by a statement from the teacher, who observed, "Menurut saya dalam hal ini, sangat jelas terlihat bahwa siswa termotivasi untuk berlatih membaca, tentu hal ini membantu meningkatkan kosakata mereka dalam bahasa Inggris. Siswa juga tampak lebih bersemangat dan antusias dalam memahami serta menganalisis teks dengan menggunakan strategi ini." At this stage, students' experience in learning reading comprehension with Discovery Learning reveals that they feel more comfortable and collaborative. Working in groups allows them to share tasks and gather information efficiently. This was supported by the students who stated that this strategy was *"Mempermudah soalnya bisa mempersingkat waktu, karena kerja sama dengan kelompok, jadi untuk tugasnya dibagi-bagi, membuat lebih efektif."* In addition, another student stated that *"Strategi ini sangat membantu dalam menginterpretasikan teks deskriptif karena kita perlu mencari informasi terlebih dahulu di internet atau buku."* These statements highlight the positive experiences of both students and the teacher, demonstrating how group collaboration benefited students by improving efficiency, enhancing their understanding of descriptive texts, and enriching their vocabulary.

In the fourth stage, namely "Data Processing", the students analyze and process the data they have collected through various methods, such as interviews or discussions, and interpret the results.

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Figure 4. The Students Process the Data that Has Been Collected

Based on observations, students' experiences at this stage showed that they actively engaged in analysis, discussion, and sharing ideas during group activities related to the descriptive text. One student stated, *"Menurut saya strategi ini membantu dalam memahami bacaan teks deskriptif tadi karena strategi ini kan berkelompok ya, jadi kalo ada temen yang belum paham bisa didiskusikan masalahnya, dimana yang belum paham sama dimana yang udah paham. Jadi bisa saling bantu."* This was reinforced by the teacher, who highlighted the students' behaviors and mentioned, *"Menurut saya siswa terlihat senang karena melalui diskusi, mereka bisa lebih bebas bertukar pikiran dan menyampaikan ide-ide mereka dengan anggota kelompok."* Students actively engaged in meaning-making through group discussions.

Next, in the "Verification" stage, the teacher guides students to assess if the problem is solved and the questions are answered, with each group presenting their findings to the class.

Figure 5. The Students Present Their Findings

Figure 6. The Teacher Provides an Explanation Related to the Topic

Students' experiences at this stage showed that they felt more confident and supported in evaluating the results of their discussions. During group presentations, students had the opportunity to clarify their understanding and confirm if the answers they found were correct. This was because, after the presentations, the teacher immediately provided feedback related to the descriptive text material. This is evident in figures 5 and 6 above. Students also expressed that *"Strategi ini bermanfaat dalam meningkatkan berani tampil di depan untuk presentasi."* The teacher further supported this, saying, *"...mereka aktif berdiskusi dengan kelompoknya sebelum di tahap verification mereka mempresentasikan hasilnya, hal ini meningkatkan kemampuan siswa dalam mengkomunikasikan ide, memperkuat pemahaman mereka, dan meningkatkan keterampilan presentasi mereka."* The verification stage helped solidify students' understanding and supported their development in presentation skills.

Finally, in the last stage, namely "Generalization" with the help of the teacher, students make general conclusions based on the results of the verification process.

Figure 7. The Students Conclude the Material that Has Been Learned

Students' experience at this "Generalization" stage shows that they feel more confident in concluding the material that has been learned. They felt that they better understood the concepts that had been discussed through previous discussions and presentations. One student stated, *"Setelah diskusi dan presentasi, saya lebih paham dan bisa menyimpulkan materi dengan lebih mudah."* This is also supported by the teacher's statement who said, *"Siswa terlihat lebih percaya diri dalam menyimpulkan materi setelah mereka melalui tahap berdiskusi dalam kelompok dan presentasi dalam tahap verification."* Therefore, it can be concluded that the generalization stage helped students strengthen their understanding, foster their ability to independently infer information, and solidified their grasp of the material.

In addition, students and teachers felt that the procedures in this Discovery Learning strategy were clear and appropriate. A student said, *"Iya… Mempermudah dalam memahami materi dan jelas prosedurnya."* This is supported by the teacher's statement, *"Menurut saya prosedurnya sudah sangat jelas dan tepat. Saya juga*

senang bisa menerapkan sistem belajar seperti ini kepada siswa di kelas yang saya ajar. Namun, saya baru tahu bahwa strategi ini disebut Discovery Learning. Setelah mengetahui namanya, prosedurnya menjadi lebih jelas dan terstruktur."

Both students and teachers highlighted the benefits of using this strategy for learning descriptive texts. Students reported better vocabulary and collaboration, with one student stating, *"Meningkatkan pemahaman tentang kosakata dan juga tentang bagaimana berkolaborasi dengan teman kelompok."* Another added, *"Dapat mempermudah mencari informasi, dapat menambah wawasan, meningkatkan daya baca, sama berdiskusi dengan teman."* The teacher echoed these benefits, saying, *"Menurut saya sangat jelas ya banyak manfaatnya. Mulai dari memperluas kosa kata siswa, meningkatkan pemahaman membaca, meningkatkan motivasi belajar, hingga membantu siswa lebih bersosialisasi dalam kelompok."*

However, the strategy also presented challenges. One student mentioned, *"Tantangannya itu ada beberapa murid yang lebih ingin belajar sendiri, ada yang tidak ingin tampil di depan, sama ada yang tidak ikut berdiskusi."* Another student noted, *"Tantangannya yaitu ketergantungan seseorang individu sama kelompoknya, sama kurang kompak dalam kelompok."* The teacher also shared, *"Oh, ya, tantangan yang dihadapi itu yang saya lihat yaa sulitnya mengontrol siswa yang kurang berkontribusi dalam kelompok. Karena terlihat ada siswa yang aktif dan ada juga yang pasif di dalam kelompok."*

In conclusion, students had positive experiences using the Discovery Learning strategy for reading comprehension of descriptive texts. It helped them expand their vocabulary, foster their comprehension, and engage in collaborative learning. The main challenges students faced included unequal participation and varying motivation among group members, which affected group dynamics.

Based on the research findings, students were actively engaged in the Discovery Learning strategy, which was already being used by their English teacher to enhance reading comprehension skills, although the teacher was unaware of the

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specific term for this approach. This finding suggests that Discovery Learning promotes active engagement and deeper comprehension of descriptive texts. Students reported having positive experiences with the strategy, as it encouraged active participation and allowed them to gain a better understanding of the texts. These experiences align with Stone's (1985) interpretation of Tyler's view that learning experiences stem from students' active involvement during the learning process, rather than the teacher's actions.

The six stages of the Discovery Learning strategy namely stimulation, problem statement, data collection, data processing, verification, and generalization were implemented during the observation. These stages provided a structured framework that facilitated critical thinking and comprehension. The active involvement of students in each stage, such as formulating problems, processing data, and generalizing findings, helped them develop a deeper understanding of the descriptive texts. This supports the idea that learning is most effective when students are actively engaged in the process, as emphasized by Tyler's principle (cited in Stone, 1985). The stages also allowed students to independently explore the material, which empowered them to think critically and analyze the content in a more meaningful way.

The findings are consistent with existing research, such as (Suryani et al., 2023), which highlighted the effectiveness of Discovery Learning in improving reading comprehension. Their study found that the strategy enhances students' ability to understand and process texts, which aligns with the findings of the current study, where students reported better text analysis and comprehension. Additionally, students in this study emphasized the strategy's benefits for vocabulary building and improving collaborative learning. This is further supported by (Carolina et al., 2024), who found that Discovery Learning enhances critical thinking and independent reasoning.

Furthermore, the results support the findings of (Damayanti et al., 2023), who noted that Discovery Learning enhances student motivation and engagement.

This study similarly found that students enjoyed the process and felt less anxious when participating in reading activities. Likewise, (Muliati & Syam, 2020) documented improvements in students' vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension using Discovery Learning, which aligns with this study's observation that students expanded their vocabulary while engaging in text analysis.

Compared to these studies, the current research adds a unique aspect, as it specifically focuses on the positive impact of group collaboration in reading comprehension of descriptive texts. The results of this study have significant implications for TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) practice. The positive outcomes from implementing Discovery Learning in reading comprehension suggest that this strategy can be applied not only to descriptive texts but also to other text types such as recounts and narrative texts. Furthermore, the strategy's collaborative nature makes it applicable across various subjects, promoting active learning and deeper understanding in students. Teachers should consider incorporating this approach into their classrooms to foster both independent and collaborative learning, ultimately improving students' engagement and comprehension skills.

Despite its benefits, some challenges were observed during the implementation of Discovery Learning. Students noted differences in motivation and participation within the group, with some students being more passive and less engaged. This is consistent with challenges reported in other studies on group dynamics, where unequal participation can hinder the effectiveness of collaborative learning. To address this, teachers may consider strategies such as assigning specific roles within the group to ensure active participation or implementing more structured group activities to reduce passive involvement. Additionally, fostering a positive group dynamic can help mitigate these challenges by encouraging all students to contribute.

By contextualizing the findings within previous research, this study strengthens the existing body of evidence supporting Discovery Learning as an

effective approach for enhancing reading comprehension. However, it also identifies areas requiring further refinement to optimize its implementation across diverse learning contexts. In conclusion, the findings from this study underscore the potential of Discovery Learning to enhance reading comprehension and foster critical thinking, vocabulary building, and collaboration among students. The insights gained can inform future teaching practices, curriculum design, and teacher training. Teachers may benefit from incorporating Discovery Learning into their pedagogical approaches, particularly in teaching reading comprehension. Future studies could explore how systematic scaffolding strategies can address challenges such as passive group members, or investigate the effectiveness of Discovery Learning in other text genres or subject areas.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that implementing the Discovery Learning strategy can significantly enhance students' reading comprehension of descriptive texts. By engaging students in a step-by-step process—stimulation, problem statement, data collection, data processing, verification, and generalization—learners become more actively involved and experience a more enjoyable, less stressful learning environment. The approach also fosters meaningful interactions, encouraging students to discuss, share ideas, and refine their understanding, ultimately broadening their vocabulary and deepening text comprehension.

Despite its positive outcomes, this study has several limitations. First, it was conducted in a single classroom context at one public high school, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings or student populations. Second, the short observation period did not allow for long-term examination of skill retention or the gradual development of group dynamics over time. Moreover, the implementation of Discovery Learning requires considerable preparation time and teacher guidance, which may pose challenges in classrooms

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with large student populations or limited instructional resources. Lastly, the study relied primarily on observational data and interviews; future research might benefit from incorporating more diverse methods, such as students' written reflections or assessments, to gain deeper insights into their learning processes.

The results have several implications for TESOL practitioners and curriculum designers. Teachers may consider integrating the Discovery Learning strategy more consistently into their reading instruction, tailoring it to various text genres and language proficiency levels. Teacher training programs could also incorporate techniques for managing diverse group dynamics, ensuring that reluctant or introverted students receive appropriate support and scaffolding. Additionally, educators may develop supplementary materials—such as guided worksheets or targeted vocabulary exercises—to address students' varied ability levels and further optimize collaborative learning experiences.

Future studies could explore the long-term impacts of Discovery Learning on reading comprehension and student motivation, extending the observation period to track changes in group cohesion and individual learner autonomy over multiple semesters or academic years. Comparative research might examine the effectiveness of Discovery Learning across different text types (e.g., expository, narrative) or language skills (listening, speaking, writing) to determine its broader applicability. Moreover, experimental designs or mixed-method approaches could provide more robust evidence of the strategy's effectiveness and offer clearer guidance on how to adapt it for diverse EFL contexts. Additionally, integrating technology-based tools could offer practical solutions to address classroom constraints and enhance students' independent learning capabilities.

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